

**BDAC Ecosystem Restoration Work Group
Meeting Summary
March 26, 1997**

The eleventh meeting of the BDAC Ecosystem Work Group was held on Wednesday March 26, 1997 at the Resource Building from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

(Some attendees who arrived late and/or who did not sign in are not listed below)

BDAC Members present were:

Mary Selkirk, Chair	Tib Belza	Lee Lehman
Bob Raab		

Invited Participants of the Work Group present were:

Gary Bobker	Pete Chadwick	Steve Ford
Bruce Herbold	Jeff Jaraczski	Sally Shanks
Tom Zuckerman		

CALFED Staff/Consultant Team present were:

Dick Daniel	Sharon Gross	Eugenia Laychak
Ray McDowell	Greg Young	

Other Participants included:

Bill Alsop	Anthony Barkett	Serge Birk
Annalena Bronson	Earl Brown	Robert Caikoski
Mike Chapel	Robert Clark	Gilbert Cosio
Bruce DiGennaro	Rick Dreher	Bill DuBois
Anthony Farrington	Dan Fults	Liz Howard
Linda Hunter	Steve Johnson	Marti Kie
John Kopchik	Randy Lee	Roger Masuda
John Mills	Earl Nelson	Dennis O'Conner
Allan Oto	Elizabeth Patterson	Jeff Phipps
John Renning	Robin Reynolds	Nicole Sandkulla
Philip Unger	Steve Weiner	

Several documents were distributed at the meeting. These included: 1) *Statement of Principles of California Flood Management and Floodplain Restoration*, distributed by Gary Bobker, Bay Institute; 2) *Revised Implementation Objective Statements* (not new, copies provided for informational purposes to accompany discussion of indicators); 3) draft *Indicators of Ecosystem Performance*; 4) *Part I. Case Study - Overview of Case Study: Action Elements*; and 5) *Proposal for Facilitated Scientific Review and Joint Fact Finding for the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan*.

Mary Selkirk, the Work Group chair, opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The meeting included a presentation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on flood management strategies, a presentation on development of indicators for the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP), and an overview and discussion regarding the work of the Assurances Work Group.

Corps Flood Management Strategies

Rick Dreher, Army Corps of Engineers, provided an overview of the Corps' flood management strategy. A directive from the administration asked the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to form an interagency task force, led by the Corps, to develop and implement a disaster recovery plan. The plan has four phases: Phase I -- emergency response (primarily in the form of flood fighting), Phase 2 -- initial recovery to provide interim (20-25 year) protection, aimed at closing levee breaches, Phase 3 -- final restoration to return to current flood protection levels, with opportunities to focus on non-structural alternatives (including land purchase and property relocation), and Phase 4 -- long-term flood management needs to solve reoccurring problems, again emphasizing non-structural alternatives. Rick stated that the interagency task force includes federal representatives from FEMA, EPA, FWS, NRCS, NMFS, Department of Transportation, and Department of Housing and Urban Development. CALFED and DWR are also included.

Currently, Rick stated, the task force is receiving and reviewing applications for repair and rehabilitation. Cost was stated by Rick as an important consideration. For instance, it would not be practical to relocate the whole of Yuba City, but purchase of land and relocation of property for flood easements (controlled by local interests) in some rural areas is more cost-effective than rehabilitation and continued maintenance of levees. Land uses on the flood easements would include anything suitable for flood plain (e.g., agriculture, habitat). A question was raised as to whether the Corps will still be involved with permitting and dredging activities if they have relinquished control? Rick answered that none of the current protection mechanisms would be removed.

Lester stated that CALFED is part of the interagency task force, and is looking at broad collaboration during Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the Corps' process. CALFED has been included in the process to possibly expand and modify programs as they are developed. Lester stated that the dilemma between Phase 3 and Phase 4 efforts is the focus on next-year protection versus long-term management and protection. Many of the ideas being discussed in CALFED's ecosystem restoration fit well into the Corps' Phase 4. In addition, there is interest on the part of some stakeholders to accept additional roles for flood protection. For instance, landowners flooded a result of a levee breach on the upper reaches of the San Joaquin River recognize that those breaches and subsequent flooding saved the town of Firebaugh from flooding. They may be willing to develop what occurred accidentally into a more planned program. As for public outreach, Lester stated that CALFED can integrate phase 4 issues into outreach efforts this summer. Phase 3 issues are more difficult but can be integrated into the Ecosystem Roundtable process.

A question was asked with respect to recalculating flood capacities as a result of January's runoff events. Rick stated that the Corps is modifying values to reflect new data, just as with any other new record flow data. Rick stated that the Corps is also developing a hydrologic model of the entire system to aid in identifying flow constraints. Concern was expressed by Delta interests that improvements upstream to handle flood flows will have adverse impacts in the Delta. Rick stated that the system is being looked at in its entirety.

Rick stated that flood management studies are underway for several areas, including the towns of Tehama and Hamilton City. These studies are scheduled for completion in September.

It was requested by a Work Group member that CALFED develop a strategy to interact with both the Corps and SB1086 processes. It was felt that as individual levee projects were evaluated, all parties need to be on the same page. There is concern by some river diverters that they will spend millions of dollars for fish screening only to have a levee setback program, or meander program leave their diversion "high and dry". It was felt that the SB1086 process is not including some of these issues in its process. CALFED recognizes these issues and will include them as the Program moves forward.

Update on Effort to Develop Indicators of Ecosystem Recovery

Bruce Herbold, EPA, provided the Work Group members with an overview of the indicator development process. The intent of indicators, according to Bruce, is to help us define success; i.e. when we have achieved ecosystem recovery. Bruce stated that the process for identifying indicator species has been developed, but development of the indicators themselves still has to be done. Bruce noted that the process includes three primary levels of indicators: local, zonal, and landscape. Appropriate indicators for each level will be developed.

A question was raised with regard to the perception that the majority of ecosystem processes all involve flow. Does that predispose a flow based solution? The intent, stated Bruce, is not to have flow based results but rather look at the relationships of benefits to flows and develop preferred conditions where feasible and practical. However, flow is an important factor in maintenance of ecological processes. Flow provides energy to transport sediments and reshapes channels and cannot be overlooked as to its benefit to the overall ecosystem processes.

A question was raised as to how to account for the dynamics of habitat and flow with regard to indicators. Bruce stated that the use of various levels, especially zonal and landscape will take into consideration the process dynamics.

It was suggested that CALFED begin to use the term "preferred" instead of "natural" when discussing flow. Others felt that we need to still reference natural flow as the model for determining preferred flows. This concern was in reference to the ERPP Ecosystem Elements listed in one of the handouts.

Concern was expressed with regard to the natural limitations to what can actually be restored. For example, it was stated, the Delta lands cannot rise above sea level by themselves. Therefore, establishment of some habitat types cannot occur because of insufficient conditions. CALFED recognizes that there are limitations. It is hoped that the indicator process will allow understanding of why restoration cannot occur in certain locations and allow for that desired ecosystem process to be shifted elsewhere in the system. It is recognized that some habitat restoration is just not going to happen in certain locations.

Bruce discussed what kinds of indicators may be used for what types of processes and habitats. Indicators can include both synthetic and creative types. A synthetic indicator would incorporate many structural and functional characteristics - a Dow Jones Index of sorts. The development of indicator levels (i.e., how much toxicity is allowable) is intended to be a technical issue. A lot of scientific research over the years can provide CALFED with many of the appropriate indicator levels. Setting goals is part of the purpose of indicators. Whether the goals are reached or not is another question. Maybe a goal is not even achievable, but none-the-less, the indicator allows a measure of success with restoration of ecosystem processes.

Assurance for Ecosystem Restoration

Mary Scoonover provided an overview of the efforts of the Assurances Work Group. The Work Group is currently developing a case-study, complete with programmatic actions, that will result in drafting of some preliminary assurances. The assurance process is trying to identify the spectrum of possibilities, as a concurrent process to the development of the alternatives. A preliminary assurances report will be out late this summer, with a more formal version this fall, accompanying the draft PEIS/EIR. Mary reminded the group that assurances are only a method of ensuring a process, they are not intended to ensure an outcome. The Assurances Work Group is asking the Ecosystem Work Group for input. What does the ecosystem program need (criteria/qualities)? Does the case-study include all of the difficult issues? If not, how can it be modified?

A question was raised as to whether the assurance work is addressing permit coordination issues. Mary stated that this is definitely one of the roadblocks. Given existing conditions, CALFED programs have to work within the confines of existing authorities. CALFED does not supplant existing authorities. However, the assurances group is trying to look at ways to coordinate over the long-term. The hope is that involvement of agencies from the onset in program development will reduce the likelihood of permit denials. The Assurance Work Group has not taken on permit streamlining. Other CALFED forums are discussing that issue.

It was suggested that there needs to be continued public involvement and public reporting of how well the ecosystem restoration process is proceeding. Reports would need to be periodic and have a common, agreed upon format. Agreement on format is necessary to overcome concerns of placing opinions into reports for particular, one-sided purposes.

It was noted that the Ecosystem Work Group cannot provide a thorough response regarding the necessary assurances at this meeting. An Assurances workshop is tentatively scheduled for May 15.

Mary cautioned that the intent of assurances is not to assure the outcome, but rather to assure that a process was in place to deal with the outcome. It was felt that there is a need for an assurance that adaptive management will occur. This will allow goals to be met. Mary stated that all stakeholders are going to have to become comfortable with an element of risk. CALFED wants everyone at a comfort level such that the process can move forward, even if the final outcome cannot be guaranteed. It was suggested that there needs to be an assurance that resources are not limited to only allow the minimum to be accomplished.

Peer Review Process

Sharon Gross provided that Work Group with a brief overview of the proposal outlined for technical and peer review of the ERPP. The proposal included examples of the types of questions that would be the focus of review panels. CALFED is soliciting input on the questions and the criteria outlined for panel selection.

It was suggested that instead of developing a whole new panel, CALFED should examine the existing IEP scientific review team. This team has many of the leading scientists and researchers who have already expressed a willingness to be involved with reviews. It was felt by others that this group may not span the diversity of issues necessary, but would be a good core to start from. Other experts could be added where necessary. It was also suggested that the review team be allowed to divide up issue areas themselves, rather than having them forced into predetermined issue areas. Comments on the proposal should be directed to Kate Hansel at CALFED.

The next meeting is scheduled for (from 9 a.m. to noon):

- April 23, 1997

This meeting will include discussion of adaptive management, a debriefing from the April 8, ERPP workshop, development of the technical review panel, and more discussion on assurance needs.